

## Government Relations Update for April 2013

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### April Scurry

- April was a very busy month in the legislature! All bills that were going to advance through the legislative process had to be passed by their originating policy committee by April 18<sup>th</sup>, so there was a rush to complete public hearings and work sessions in all the policy committees. Legislators scrambled to keep their bills alive. Many bills that were passed by their originating policy committees were referred to Ways and Means to determine the fiscal impact, or to a policy committee in the other legislative chamber.
- Bills of significance for Oregon Tech are:
  - o HB 3232 and HB 3233: Education Strategic Investments: these two bills include the Governor's strategic investments in education and professional development for teachers, including funds to support STEM Partnerships. They both passed out of committee on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and were referred to Ways and Means.
  - o 3341: "Adverse impact bill": This bill modifies the program approval process for colleges and universities seeking authorization of new academic programs. It requires notification of proprietary institutions and a waiting period for collaboration to mitigate adverse impacts, and then allows the public institutions to proceed with program approval. It passed the House with 36 Ayes and 24 Nays on April 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - o HB 2158 A Engrossed: Veterans educational benefits: Allows non-resident veterans to pay in-state tuition in Oregon. Passed the House on a vote of 59 Ayes and 1 Excused. Has been referred to the Senate. This bill could attract a disproportionate number of non-resident vets from other states to Oregon, unless



*Rep. Gail Whitsett and President Maples discuss Oregon Tech's priorities in the Capitol.*

Federal policy follows suit to allow all veterans to pay in-state tuition anywhere in the U.S.

- 2970-A Engrossed: Directs the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to develop standards related to Associate transfer degrees, specifically in engineering, to maximize transferrable credits. Passed the House with a vote of 57-3. Referred to Senate Education and Workforce Development.
- 2979: Establishes a work group to study how to develop common course numbering at Oregon public colleges and universities. Passed the House on a vote of 59-1. Referred to Senate Education and Workforce Development.
- 3169-A Engrossed – We are working to amend this energy-related bill to include geothermal energy as a source of power that is eligible for net metering, and to seek the ability for Oregon Tech to aggregate its solar and geothermal energy for net metering purposes. If this amendment is accepted and passed in the bill, it will result in a cost savings on the geothermal plant construction.
- 297: Requires all education entities to have an achievement compact advisory committee. President Maples testified about Oregon Tech’s advisory committees, and suggested that these additional committees were not necessary. The bill did not pass out of its originating policy committee.
- 498: Establishes a Career and Technical Education Revitalization Grant Program. Referred out of committee to Ways and Means. This bill has traction, if the Ways and Means co-chairs can find the dollars to fund it.
- 702-A Engrossed: Directs the Oregon Student Access Commission (OSAC) to award at least 25% (formerly 50% before the bill was amended) of Oregon Opportunity Grants to students pursuing degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Referred out of the Senate Education Committee to Ways and Means.
- 822-Enrolled: Reduces cost-of-living increases on PERS benefits over \$20,000 per year. This bill was passed in the Senate on April 11<sup>th</sup> and the House on April 24<sup>th</sup>, along party lines in both Chambers. The bill will produce some savings in budgets for educational institutions, such as Oregon Tech, but affects retiree benefits, and does not produce enough cost savings to balance either the



*Representative John Davis, R-Wilsonville, and Lita Colligan discuss STEM bills in Salem.*

proposed Governor's Balanced Budget or Co-Chairs Budget. The legislature is still seeking additional tax revenue or cost savings in the amount of \$255M to create a balanced budget.

### **Budget Priorities**

- President Maples focused his attention in Salem this month on Ways and Means Committee members, trying to solidify support for Oregon Tech's budget priorities: \$10M in F bonds as part of the Wilsonville Campus financing package; \$2M for Cornett Hall feasibility study and campus facilities master planning; the higher education operating budget, Oregon Opportunity grant funds, and sports lottery funds. President Maples is hearing a very positive response to budget requests, and a growing recognition of the important role that Oregon Tech plays in achieving 40-40-20, as the state's only polytechnic, and because of the strong partnerships with schools and community colleges.

### **University Governance**

- SB270-4: Higher Education Governance: Allows the three large universities to establish university boards and provides a process for smaller universities, including Oregon Tech, to seek a university board later. As currently drafted, the bill preserves the State Board of Higher Education as the Governing Board for the four small universities. The bill now authorizes a Special Committee on University Governance for the small universities, and a separate Work Group to further study shared services among the universities and possibly community colleges. It is likely that SB270 will be further amended in Ways and Means, before it is presented for a floor vote.



*Meagan Chuinard, Chief of Staff for Representative John Davis, proudly flies the Oregon Tech pendant in the Capitol.*

### **Administration and Shared Services**

- HB3120-A: Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC): Provides powers to the HECC for funding allocation and program approval for public colleges and universities. This bill passed out of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee on April 19th, on a partisan vote, with five Democrats in support and four Republicans opposed. The committee abandoned the idea of a Department of Post-Secondary Education, and instead focused on providing authority to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, which was originally established last session in SB242.

House Bill 3120-A, as amended, re-charters the HECC and tasks it with the following:

- o Advise the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) on state goals for higher education, strategic investment, and coordination of data collection
- o Adopt strategic plan for achievement of state post-secondary education goals
- o Recommend to Governor and OEIB consolidated higher education budget biennially

- Distribute appropriations to community colleges, public universities, and student access programs
- Approve significant changes to academic programs offered by community colleges and public universities
- Adopt changes to mission statements of public universities
- Authorize degrees offered by independent post-secondary institutions operating in Oregon
- Oversee licensing of career schools

### **Budget and Public Hearings**

Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee conducted public hearings about the budget throughout the state during the month of April, seeking input on the public's priorities. Charles Massie from the Klamath Falls Chamber of Commerce testified at the hearing in Ashland on April 13<sup>th</sup> in support of more higher education funding.

**To read testimony by President Maples, go to:**

[Legislative Testimony | Oregon Tech](#)

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